

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3–13 and 15–21 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 13 are amended and claims 2 and 14 are canceled. Support for the amendments to claims 1 and 13 can be found in canceled claims 2 and 14. No new matter is added. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and prompt allowance in view of at least the following remarks.

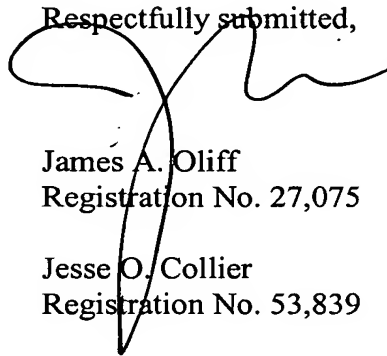
The Office Action rejects claims 1 and 11–13 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,970,181 (Ohtsu). The Office Action objects to claims 2–10 and 14–21 as depending on a rejected base claim but notes the claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicant amends claims 1 and 13 by including the allowed features of claims 2 and 14. As the Office Action notes that claims 2 and 14 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, Applicant asserts that currently amended claims 1 and 13 are patentable. In addition, claims 3–12 and 15–21 are patentable, at least in view of the patentability of claims 1 and 13, from which they variously depend, as well as for the additional features they recite. Therefore, Applicant requests withdrawal of the rejection.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 3–13 and 15–21 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: July 17, 2008

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